

REMARKS

Claims 1-22, 24-39 are pending in this application. Claims 1 and 26 have been rewritten to specify that the ultraviolet exposure, annealing and silanol capping operations occur in a single process vessel. Support for this amendment may be found on page 10, lines 14-16. Claims 22 and 31 have been rewritten in independent form and claim 32 has been amended to include the limitations of former claim 22.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-21, 24-30 and 32-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(s) as being unpatentable under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Birnbaum et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,548,113 (“Birnbaum”) in view of Lukas et al. U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2004/0096672 (“Lukas”).

Independent claims 1 and 32 have been amended to specify that the UV exposure (porogen removal), annealing and silanol capping operations occur in a single process vessel. This aspect of the invention is discussed on page 10, lines 14-16. Suitable apparatuses are discussed on page 13, line 6 – page 14, line 33.

While Birnbaum describes various reactors that may be used for dehydroxylation reactions, the reference does not teach or suggest that any of the reactors may be used for UV exposure. Lukas describes various post UV-exposure treatment steps for its porous film at paragraphs [0060] through [0072]; however there is no mention of performing any of these operations in the same process vessel as the UV-exposure treatment. Thus, performing the UV-mediated porogen removal, annealing and silanol capping operations in a single process vessel is neither taught nor suggested by the prior art.

Independent claim 32 has been amended to include the limitation that the silanol capping and annealing operations are performed simultaneously. Applicants believe that this renders claim 32 allowable for at least the reasons claims 22 and 31 have been indicated allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Thus, Applicants submit that independent claims 1, 26 and 32 and their dependent claims are patentable over the cited art

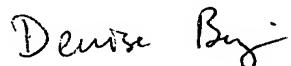
Objections

Claims 22 and 31 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants have rewritten these claims in independent form, obviating the objections.

Conclusion

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance. Thus, Applicants respectfully request a Notice of Allowance from the Examiner. Should any unresolved issues remain, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number provided below. No fees appear to be necessary for this Amendment. However, if the Commissioner determines that any fee is due, such fee may be charged to deposit account No. 50-0388 (Order No. NOVLP075).

Respectfully submitted,
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